

## Reporting Chronic Webinar

**JULIA BROWN:** Hello and welcome to this short training on “Reporting on Chronic Homelessness based on Records in an HMIS.” This training is provided by HUD’s Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs.

**JULIA BROWN:** I’m Julia Brown, with Abt Associates, a technical assistance provider for HUD.

**JULIA BROWN:** Before we begin, it’s important to understand that there are three separate, but related concepts at play when considering how HMIS can be used to assist in identifying people who are experiencing chronic homelessness. This webinar is intended to help CoCs and HMIS Lead Agencies understand the fundamental distinctions between these concepts and to provide information that can be woven into appropriate provider and end-user trainings.

This particular webinar covers using information in clients’ HMIS records to generate reports on the people experiencing chronic homelessness in your CoC.

The other, related concepts are: Recording the information about a client’s living situation in HMIS needed to calculate their chronic homeless status. Every HMIS-participating project has to record clients’ living situation and disability status in HMIS at project start and can simply record that information based on client self-response.

And also, as shown in the middle of the screen, a related concept is using HMIS to document a client’s chronic homeless status for eligibility purposes. This is achieved by looking at a client’s entries and exits in HMIS, rather than the self-reported data collected at each project start.

The subject of this webinar, reporting on chronic homelessness, as shown in the red box, combines these two concepts by looking at self-reported data and enrollment histories for each client to determine whether a person meets the definition of chronic homelessness.

**JULIA BROWN:** This brief presentation is intended to provide more detail on how to use HMIS records to count people who are experiencing chronic homelessness in your HMIS-participating projects. The presentation will also describe how the HMIS-reporting works for different periods of time. Today’s webinar will not be an overview of the Final Rule defining Chronic Homelessness. Additional resources about that topic are available elsewhere on the HUD Exchange.

**JULIA BROWN:** Now we are going to talk about the different types of reports required for national and local purposes.

**JULIA BROWN:** HUD requires, or will eventually require, inclusion of some data about the people experiencing chronic homelessness in these national reports: The Point-In-Time (or PIT) Count, Annual Performance Reports (or APRs), and the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (also known as the AHAR). And there are local uses for this type of reporting as well, such as measuring progress against the Benchmark and Compiling an “Active List” from a CoC’s HMIS.

**JULIA BROWN:** HUD is aware that some of the data used to identify chronic homelessness are based on client self-report. For reporting purposes, this is fine and CoCs should not limit who is included in their APRs, PIT Counts, or local reports based on documentation availability. No

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documentation is required in order to enter information about a client's length of time homeless or disabling condition in HMIS. Documentation for eligibility purposes is only required for enrollment into a CoC Program-funded PSH project, and those documentation requirements are described separately.

**JULIA BROWN:** For local purposes – in other words, creating an active list or measuring performance toward the benchmark – the HMIS lists only serve as a starting point. For these local reports, you will want to be more inclusive and flexible, so you can be sure you're capturing any individual who has been identified as chronically homeless and who has not yet exited to a permanent housing destination.

In order to do this, you'll want to cast a wide net to get the clearest view of the priority population in your community, which may mean including additional people from local lists or other sources. Of course, if you do have multiple sources, ultimately you'll want to work on processes to get that information entered into HMIS or merged into another data system, so that relevant data can be immediately included on an active list.

If you have information about a client that suggests that they should be "taken off the list" of people considered CH, for example if someone has moved into a permanent housing situation, you may remove them from the active list even if they appear as chronically homeless as of their last project start date. However, projects are cautioned that this does not mean that end users should change raw data in HMIS from the client's start date record. Instead, projects may need to consider a client's destination or exit status, or customize some other way of indicating that the client is no longer chronically homeless.

**JULIA BROWN:** Now let's talk about the calculations used in generating reports of people experiencing chronic homelessness.

**JULIA BROWN:** We will limit this discussion to the data elements that are relevant to the calculations, which are shown on the screen. If you need a refresher on the data elements, please review the HMIS Data Standards Manual, which is available on the HUD Exchange.

**JULIA BROWN:** So let's start with the basic building blocks: how do we use the HMIS data to identify someone who might be experiencing chronic homelessness?

In order to even appear in an HMIS report about the people who are chronically homeless, a client must have the following responses recorded in HMIS. If these data are not recorded in HMIS, the system cannot generate a report showing them as chronically homeless.

So to start, in data element 3.917, the client must show a time continuously homeless of 1 year or more, or that they had four or more homeless experiences in the last three years that total up to twelve months or more.

In addition to that, the client must have a disabling condition recorded in HMIS. That can either be through the disabling condition data element 3.8, or it can be any one of the individual special needs, like "mental health condition" for example, that is marked as "expected to be of long-continued and indefinite duration and substantially impair the client's ability to live independently."

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**JULIA BROWN:** When we think about chronic homelessness, we also have to think about timing. Chronic status is always defined for a person at a particular point in time. So someone who doesn't meet the definition today could meet it tomorrow, and vice versa.

Since we have this time element layered in, we will need to think about three different ways of reporting on chronic homelessness. First, we can produce a report showing all the people in a project or in the entire Continuum who were chronically homeless at the time of their most recent Project Start date. We could also produce a different report showing all the people in a project or in an entire Continuum who were chronically homeless as of a particular point in time, such as the date of the PIT count for example. Finally, we can produce a report showing all the people who were ever chronically homeless at any time over the course of a specified reporting period. So they might not have been chronically homeless at the beginning of the reporting period, but they might have become chronically homeless during the reporting period. This report would also pick up people who were chronically homeless at the beginning of the reporting period, but have since fallen out of that status.

**JULIA BROWN:** First, we'll talk about the report on people who were chronically homeless at the time of their most recent Project Start. The specifications for this type of report are provided to HMIS vendors in the HMIS Standard Reporting Terminology Glossary document, which is available on the HUD Exchange, and vendors are expected to be able to incorporate this methodology into their reporting mechanisms in your HMIS.

For this report, a client must be disabled and one of the following must be true: either data element 3.917 shows that the client entered from a literally homeless situation with a year or more of continuous literal homelessness, or the client entered from a literal homeless situation, has been homeless four or more times in the last three years, and the cumulative total of all those times homeless is twelve months or more.

**JULIA BROWN:** Next, we'll get a little more complicated, and talk about people who are chronically homeless at a particular point in time. Again, the specifications for this type of report are in the HMIS Glossary document and a report like this should be available in your HMIS.

For this report, a client must be disabled, and on the report date, the client must be in an emergency shelter, safe haven, or street outreach project. Then, one of the following must be true: The data recorded in 3.917 plus the client's actual enrollment up until the report date must total twelve or more consecutive months, or the data recorded in 3.917 and the current enrollment together must show four or more separate times homeless that cumulatively total twelve months or more.

**JULIA BROWN:** Finally, we'll bring it all together in the most complex report. The first two reports I discussed rely solely on the combination of the client self-reported data and the current HMIS enrollment. In order to broaden the potential for identifying all clients who are chronically homeless, CoCs may wish to also mine the enrollment data recorded in HMIS to see whether additional people are identified as having been chronically homeless at any point over the course of a reporting period.

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This type of report would capture any client with a disability and one of the following situations: The client was chronically homeless at entry, like the first type of report we discussed, The client aged into chronic status, like the second type of report we discussed, or the client's combined HMIS enrollments in street outreach, emergency shelter, and safe haven projects and their self-reported information in 3.917 shows twelve or more months of continuous homelessness or four or more separate experiences that cumulatively total twelve or more months.

I'll note that the purpose of this presentation is merely on how to leverage information from HMIS to derive these lists, not how to use the lists in conjunction with other sources to support day-to-day activities. So if you do generate this type of master list for regular prioritization or benchmarking, you may need to use additional information to determine if the individuals are still chronically homeless in your CoC on the date of the report.

CoCs with local analysis capacity may also want to consider modifying a similar report to identify those at-risk of becoming chronically homeless – for example those who are close to “aging into” chronic homelessness or those who have long experiences of homelessness, but don't yet have a disabling condition.

**JULIA BROWN:** Listed up on your screen now are some additional resources on chronic homelessness and HMIS that are available on the HUD Exchange and we encourage you to check out the materials that are linked here.

**JULIA BROWN:** If you have any additional questions about using HMIS to report on chronic homeless status, please use the AAQ function on the HUD Exchange. Thanks for listening to this brief presentation!